

L'APRÈS-MIDI / XIÀ WÛ

Written by

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INT. SCHOOL HALL - DAY

Rows of school children sit cross-legged on the wooden floors in green and gold uniforms. They all rise for the school song, led by the band at the front of the hall.

ALL

(singing)

...Green and gold are our school
colours, Australian rules respect
each other, raise our voices hear
us say, We are the students of...

We find Elodie (9) amongst the school band playing the clarinet. She plays with passion for a few bars, then loses her place within the music. She looks around to her fellow wind-instruments, mimicking their fingering, without blowing any air into her clarinet or making any noise. She's embarrassed, scared of being found out.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

Elodie is crammed up against a window by two bubbly students on the seat next to her laughing and chatting. She is enthralled in a book.

LATER

The students have cleared off the bus, leaving Elodie, still reading, and a few other stragglers, as they approach the final stops.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Elodie hobbles off the bus, heaving a backpack nearly her size. She walks down the street and deep into leafy Sydney Suburbia.

INT. SINGAPOREAN RESTAURANT - DAY

Waiters bustle around, cleaning, setting tables, carrying in boxes of ingredients. MAC (10), the son of the owner, stands on a chair, talking at whoever will listen, but largely being ignored.

MAC

Ms Baker was so mad at him, she said he was being 'dangerous' or something, and we all were trying so hard to not laugh, I had to just stare at my shoelaces so she wouldn't realise but I think his parents got called after school. All because of the see-saw! So stupid-as, right?

No one responds.

I/E. SALON - DAY

Elodie has not walked home, but through the front door of her father's hair salon. This is ALAIN (30/40s), wearing a polo shirt and blowdrying an elderly woman, SUSAN's, hair. He yells out, in French, and later in heavily accented English, over the noise.

ALAIN

(to Susan)

I cannot believe he speak to you like that.

(noticing Elodies)

Cou cou!! Tu te souviens de Susan?
(Hello! Do you remember Susan?)

ELODIE

Oui.

(very formally polite)

Hi Susan, how are you?

SUSAN

Good thank you, darling. Your dad is taking very good care of me.

ALAIN

Of course! You look like you 21.
Very stylish. Very European.

Elodie takes her cue to leave, and slinks behind the computer at the front desk as her dad continues to charm the woman. She pulls up a game of solitaire and mindlessly stacks the virtual cards.

She hears a knock on the front window.

We find the source of the sound, MAC, who we met in the restaurant. He calls out to her and beckons her outside.

But they are only outside for a few steps, before they take a turn, and walk straight through the door of the Singaporean restaurant next door.

MAC
You hungry?

ELODIE
Uh. Sure.

His dad, MICHAEL, (30/40s), well-put together and the owner of the restaurant, peeks his head out from behind the bar.

MICHAEL
(Singlish)
Ah boy, you got homework anot? Can use the table in the corner.
(beat)
Oh, hello Elodie.

ELODIE
Hi, Mr Tan.

They walk to the back of the restaurant towards the kitchen. When they get there Mac walks in without hesitating, whilst Elodie hangs at the door.

Mac grabs bowls full of food, reaching in the fridge, the pantry, out of pans.

INT. SINGAPOREAN RESTAURANT - DAY

Elodie admires the hundreds of different bottles arranged behind the bar.

ELODIE
What's the best drink here?

MAC
I mean, Tiger Beer.

Elodie is terrified. She's not a rule breaker.

MAC (CONT'D)
But for kids... Bandung (Ban-dong) or Milo Dinosaur. But I think definitely bandung.

INT. SINGAPOREAN RESTAURANT - DAY

They sip at their bright pink drinks. They use straws to blow bubbles in the drink, and test how close they can get to making the drinks overflow. They take huge gulps straight from the glass, and admire their pink milk mustaches.

EXT. CURBSIDE - DAY

They sit on the nature strip, spring rolls between their fingers like wolverine claws. They're role-playing at being fierce and strong, and teaching each other how to swear in their second languages, which they don't have full mastery of themselves.

It's their own silly version of the 'penis' game. They yell out the words louder and louder, challenging one another -
MERDE - 他妈的 (tā mā de)

A car drives past.

INT. SALON - DAY

Behind the computer at the reception desk. Elodie's finger is on the right arrow key, Mac's on the left. They hit the keys ferociously as a game of pinball runs on screen.

ALAIN

Bouge, bouge! Il faut qu'elle paie.
(Move, move, she needs to pay.)

The kids move off as Alain slides behind the computer and brings up his booking software to help another client pay.

Elodie runs to a cupboard, knowing exactly what to find there. She holds up a book full of fake dyed hair up to Mac's hair, imagining him with blonde, pink, green hair.

She sits him in the chair and brushes his hair up into a mohawk, styling it with gel.

ALAIN (CONT'D)

Ok, c'est l'heure à y aller. (it's time to go.) Tu veux un petit boulot? (Do you want a little job to do?) Good. You two, grab a broom each, and sweep up into the back bin.

Elodie and Mac both grab a broom and sweep the hair from the floor into orderly piles at the back of the salon, before scooping them up with a dustpan, and depositing them in the bin. As they do this Alain switches off the salon lights one by one.

Alain ushers the kids out.

ALAIN (CONT'D)

Très bien, merci! (Very good. Thank you!). We'll see you next week Mac, you look after you family.

MAC

Seeya! Seeya Elodie!

Elodie and Alain head to their parked car, as Michael sticks his head out the restaurant.

MICHAEL

Good day, Alain?

ALAIN

Busy but good, my friend. C'est good to be busy, mate!

MICHAEL

We are ready for Friday night rush too!

(as Mac approaches)

Right, anot ah boy? Ní xiang bāng wo bai zhuō zi ma (Do you want to help me set the table?)

Elodie watches from the car as Michael pats Mac on the back and ushers him in.

The car drives off.

INT. SINGAPOREAN RESTAURANT - EVENING

Wait staff are hustling, setting tables, lighting candles, turning on the speakers in preparation for dinner. Mac follows his father into the restaurant, where he stops at the entrance desk and flips through the reservations book.

MICHAEL

(only half paying attention)

Elodie's Hao ma? (Is Elodie good?)
Ei right hor. Ni de gōng kè zuò hao le ma? (Have you done your homework?)

MAC
Dad, in English!
(theatrically)
We're Aussie now!

MICHAEL
(chuckles)
You're right. Ni de homework done
liao ma? (Have you done your
homework?)

MAC
Pretty much.

MICHAEL
What does that mean 'pretty much'?

MAC scans the room, looking at two waiters straightening their uniforms and murmuring.

MAC
It means yes. And I can absolutely
help you serve tonight!

MICHAEL
(suspicious)
Okay... But remember, if you no do
your homework you will never get
into university, and then Ni bù bì
xiang zhe lí kāi wo ah. (You don't
have to ever think of leaving me).

MAC is already running towards the kitchen.

MAC
Yeah, yeah, I know!

MAC stops and turns back to his father.

MAC (CONT'D)
And dad. In Australia they call it
Uni.

He disappears into the kitchen, leaving his dad smiling and shaking his head at his son.

INT. SINGAPOREAN RESTAURANT - EVENING

Different day. Some time has past, indicated by Mac's new hairstyle.

Singing galore. Mac, his father, and all the wait staff are gathered around a giant cake, which glows with the light of 11 candles.

ALL

Zhù ni shēng rì kuài lè. Zhù ni shēng rì kuài lè. Zhù ni xìng fú, zhù ni jiàn kāng. Zhù ni shēng rì kuài lè. (Happy Birthday to you, Happy Birthday to you, Here's to your happiness, Here's to your good health, Happy Birthday to you.)

Mac blows them out and cheers.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

Different day. MAC is sitting on a school bus, next to a school friend, TOM (11), looking out the window. He stares at the buildings passing by, as the bus passes the stop that he gets off to get to the restaurant.

TOM

Isn't that your stop?

MAC

Yeah, but my mum says that I'm old enough to stay home alone now.

TOM

Damn. You're so lucky. I'm not allowed to be home alone until I'm 12.

MAC goes back to looking out the window and sees the restaurant come into view. He sees Elodie walking towards her Dad's salon, head pointed to the ground, unaware of the world around her. MAC thinks about getting out. He thinks about all of the great times that he had with Elodie in the restaurant and salon. Times that he'll probably never have again.

The bus passes Elodie, panning to keep her in the center of the frame. She looks up at the bus, and for a brief second Mac feels that he might have been seen, guilt growing. But Elodie looks away just as quickly, as the bus disappears into the distance.

INT. SINGAPOREAN RESTAURANT - EVENING

An older Elodie (18) and her family walk into Mac's restaurant. Greeted by the waiter at the front door.

WAITER
Table for 6?

Nods from Elodie's family.

WAITER (CONT'D)
Follow me this way, we'll seat you
on this table just here.

They arrive at the table and seat themselves. The waiter begins laying out menus in front of each of them to look through.

WAITER (CONT'D)
Some menus for you to look through.
Someone will come over shortly,
give one of us a shout if you have
any questions.

Elodie's family begins flicking through the menu out of courtesy but they already know what they want. They've been here a million times before - duh.

But Elodie is absorbed in the paper, paying no attention to her family chatting away. She studies each dish and its content closely.

A strangely familiar voice snaps her out of it.

MAC (O.S.)
Are we all ready to order here?

Elodie looks up at this face that is at once familiar and foreign. Mac looks at her expectantly, but nothing is clicking.

The table begins to place their orders.

ALAIN
Mac! Good to see you working at
your dad's restaurant!

MAC
Seemed like a no-brainer to get
some experience from this place.

Mac looks to Elodie check if she now recognises him, but is cut off by another family member beginning to order.

We travel around the table's orders and finally land at Elodie. A small, hopeful smile on her face.

ELODIE

Do you still do Bandung?

Mac doesn't get the reference to their past, and takes it down like any other order.

MAC

Sure do! Sweet. I'll take these to the kitchen. Thanks guys!

Elodie tries her best to hide her disappointment.

Mac turns away, looking at the notepad and making sure he got his order correct. He reaches Elodie's order, the words 'Bandung' catch his eye. He's seen that drink before. Not just from any other customer, but it reminds him of...

He looks back at Elodie. They smile at each other. It's just like old times.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END.